

HARLEM FRIENDSHIP HOUSE NEWS



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Without Interracial Justice

Social Justice Will Fail

New York, N. Y., 5 Cents

THE ADORATION OF THE CROSS *Westminster, 1942*

By CARYLL HOUSLANDER

AUTHOR OF

This War Is The Passion

The world is gathered here,
In the Cathedral in Westminster.
Men and women and children
Kissing the cross.

*How old it is
The wood of the Cross!
How dark it is
How heavy and sweet.
How wide the wound
In the broken heart.
How fast the nails
In the hands and feet.*

This year
The men and women and children
Gathered here
Are used
To the hard wood.
Their lips are bruised already
Upon the rood.

They have come from many lands
Like birds migrating
Seeking the sun.
They have come from rifled nests
Driven on by a withering wind of Death.

Now
They are kissing the Cross.
There are dark brooding faces
Glimmering like lit gold.
Others, the Northern races
With blue eyes that are cold
Like frozen water,
But set in ivory-warm
Immobile faces.
The maltese are there
With damson eyes
And straight black hair
And lime wood features,
Pale and smooth and spare.
And soldiers with their great loads.
One is black
And tears are in his gentle amber eyes
He hardly seems to move,
A giant carved in ebony,
Even his folded hands
Are eloquent with love.

And dark and eager flocks
Of children.
Refugees,
Who whisper, scramble, push
Their way to peace.
Suffer them,
To come to their crumb of comfort
Hand in hand
With that invisible band
Of innocents,
Slain in Jerusalem!

The world is gathered here
In the Cathedral
In Westminster.
They have come from many lands
Like birds migrating
Through the cold ways of the wind.
One impulse driving them on and on.

Over the scorched earth,
And the raped fields
Despoiled of golden grain.
On and on to the sun
Over palls of snow,
Lying over
The multitudinous face of death.
On and on to the sun,
On and on
On wings that spread
On the winds
In cruciform.
On and on to the sun
And to the wings
At rest.

But where is the sun
In the city of Westminster?
Patient city of ruins
Shrouded in rain.

Where is a nest
For the flight
Forward winged by love
Sweeping down to rest?

It is here.
The sun
Is the red halo
Ringing the bowed Head
Of Christ,
Of Christ lying dead.

The nest
Is here
On His still Breast.

*How old it is
The wood of the cross
How dark it is
How heavy and sweet.
How wide the wound
In the broken Heart.
How fast the nails
In the hands and feet.*

The people are coming up slowly
To kiss the cross.
Hardly moving because the crowd is so big.
Moving slowly, like waves of a calm sea,
gently
Surging forward, caressing the quiet shore
With a single wave
That breaks on the steadfast rock
Whose touch disperses
The seas sorrow of shipwreck
In spray of delicate foam,
Like the hair of Mary Magdelene
Shining wet with tears
Over the feet of Christ.

The world is gathered here
Kissing the Cross.
They are not afraid,
They have made the way of the Cross.
They have nothing to fear any more.

They have carried the cross.
The refugee with his load on his back,
The soldier ready to die,
Presanctified
For the sacrifice,
Bearing his heavy pack.
The boy with the old folk
Heavy and slow on his arm,
Setting his pace to their pace
And fast on his track,
Steady,
Mechanical,
Unfailing,
Steps of Death.
The young Mother
Burdened with that most heavy burden
Because it is so light,
The fairy weight
Of the starvling child
At her breast.
And the father
Who sleeps as he walks
And carries his little son
Like a sack.

Christ with them
Christ in them,
Strength of them,
Every one.
Christ with His Cross on His back.

They have been stripped of their garments,
The home
And the livelihood,
The work of their hands
And the little lovely lands
Where their lives had root.

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Vol. 2

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HARLEM FRIENDSHIP HOUSE NEWS

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WHAT CAN I DO?

FRRIENDSHIP HOUSE NEWS is eighteen months old with this issue. For that length of time it has faithfully tried to share with its readers the tragedy of being a Negro in America. This was not difficult, for the little paper was born in the midst of it — and BECAUSE of it.

In its own small way it raises its humble voice constantly, fearlessly, crying in the desert — “Make straight the ways of the Lord” — tries too to remind Americans of the sublime doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ — calling ceaselessly for their application, WITHOUT COMPROMISE — TO THE NEGRO.

And back have come innumerable letters and calls, all asking the same question: “WHAT CAN I DO?”

This Editorial will endeavour to answer it. To do so, it is always best to start at the beginning. And the beginning in this case, for each one — is — “He” or “She.” Few of us are called to reform the world. But to reform ourselves is a constant duty. So the first step in this great crusade of Interracial Justice — which is the crying need of today — for without it there cannot be a just war, nor a lasting peace — is THE INNER REFORM OF EACH ONE OF US.

So let us start right here. Examining our own attitude to the Negro in the light of Christ's Commandments and teachings; cleansing first our own minds, hearts and souls of all prejudice against our brother and fellow American — THE NEGRO.

This done, we must build on knowledge. The only secure weapon, after prayer, against ignorance and illogical prejudices. So, let us take time off to learn about the Negro in our midst. Read his wonderful history, his achievements . . . find out what he thinks, how he feels, and what he wants! In doing so we shall grow in grace, knowledge and understanding. We shall be better Christians and better Americans too.

With cleansed minds and hearts, strong in the reality of knowledge, we now set out to do our share of nursing the wounds of the Mystical Body of Christ in America. Let us pray much, walk softly, make haste slowly here, for some of these wounds, deep and painful, were inflicted by us in the yesterday that just passed!

Let us meet the Negro first. There are many ways of accomplishing this. Personally, through hundreds of agencies, boards, work . . . through schools, worship and play. We shall find at once that it will take a long time before we gain the Negro's confidence — we shall have to PROVE THROUGH DEEDS our new-found understanding and desire to help . . . for he has been fooled so many times by “White Folks” — sold down the river so often by them, that time and deeds alone will convince him.

Yet, no matter what the cost — let us start now; asking his forgiveness, accepting his hesitancy, remembering that he desires JUSTICE above all — not charity. Always working WITH him, not FOR him — (for the Negro has come of age in the America of 1942!) — toward a real Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God.

And while we venture into this new land, let us not neglect our own backyard. Let us cultivate constantly the white field of our own race that needs teaching, converting, enlightening, as we did, only a little while ago. It is so vitally important that we should do so NOW — when we are waging a total war against the very Racism that grows in 85% of our fellow Americans' hearts.

Great as reform, indoctrination, knowledge are, they shall be futile instruments in our hands unless we translate them into deeds! If we are Employers, let us open wide the doors of employment to Negroes. If Employees, let us convince our fellow workers of the Negroes' place at our side in the factory, stores, white collar jobs and professions.

If teachers or pupils, especially of Catholic schools and colleges, let us face our fellow teachers and students with the question: “Why no or so few Negroes in our midst?” If parents or youths — what of Negroes living next door? If soldiers, sailors or aviators — what of non-segregated Armed Forces? How do I — you — stand on this in a War for Democracy? Unpopular? Perhaps! Was Christ popular?

Justice attended to — Charity will have to step in — for while you work on the larger issues of this tragic question — men, women, children — whose only sin is a dusky color of skin — are hungry, naked and sick. Give generously toward their need — come, help those who help them. There is so much to do.

With clean hearts and hands, strong in knowledge, girded with justice, clothed in charity — go forth, friends — preaching in season and out of season, the Gospel of Love and Justice — hand in hand with the Negro — building a better Tomorrow — for America and the world . . . DO IT NOW!

There is so little time left before the doors of hope close in the heart of the Negro — under the pressure of utter despair and desolation. If it does, chaos is the answer for TOMORROW. Chaos — blood and tears — for you and yours. Now is the acceptable time! Tomorrow might be a day too late!

A CHANCE

I ask you not for sympathy—

But still—

Pat me on the shoulder if you will;

Say a single word to urge me on,

And I will travel up the hill alone.

I ask you not for pity but you may—

Shake my hand or point to me the way,

And perhaps some kindly thing you say

Will give me inspiration through the day.

What I really want, my would be friend,

Is a chance to start life once again;

And a sort of friendly word or smile,

From you will make the future seem worthwhile.

THE STAFF REPORTER

By B. R. B.

DID you miss your Staff Reporter last month? We hope so. Now to bring you up to date.

During the summer FH gathers volunteer workers from near and far. Mary Joyce, Mary Elise Marin, Dorothy Rozek, Aquinas College girls from Grand Rapids, Michigan, were like a shot in the arm — pepping us all up and giving us new vitality. Blaine Cook, seminarian, from North Dakota, an old friend dear to the hearts of our little ones. Mariette Wickes, from Rochester, Nazareth College student who believes in getting a complete education. We salute the boys from Dunwoodie who have been with us faithfully all summer. They've done a splendid job, and we're certainly grateful for their help. Did we ever tell you about our reliable seminary friends from New Jersey, headed by Fred McTernan? They come en-masse practically, as regularly as the seasons. Such friends are the white corpuscles in the life blood of FH. What a privilege to know you all! May we see you again next summer.

Remember the appeal we made in our June issue for toys? The Toyery opened July 21, with Mayor LaGuardia, newsreel men, and of course, newspaper men, to make the occasion really historic. If you've seen the newsreel showing a Toyery in Harlem, well, that's us.

See you next month.

THE BARONESS JOTS IT DOWN

NATURALLY we had to have a going-away party. Usually they are a little sad. But not ours. For there was Herb — you remember Herb, we wrote often about him, "Ace" and Kathleen — our first three youngsters to go to a Catholic College — you helped to put them thru.

Well, Herb — is going away to Howard University in Washington to study Medicine. It will be a hard pull — it will cost money — but God is good — and so are you, our friends — so we have faith.

"Ace" has a job for he graduated too — He will be prefect of discipline in a Catholic School. Kathleen, we think, will join the Friendship House staff workers — and will that be some addition . . . Come see for yourself.

Charles Thompson — is leaving too — back to College — he still has 3 years to go — Richard Francis is going for the first time — he is one of our CYO boys — smart as they come, but he will have a job, to keep up with Herb, Ace, Kathleen, Charles — it will be worth watching him try!

Ann Harrigan and Ellen Tarry are leaving too — to start that new Friendship House in Chicago — so they were in on the party — Ann's face shines with an inner glow — and Ellen's looks resolute — it is not going to be easy — but it was not easy for Christ either and they see Him so clearly in the Negro — in Chicago!

Negro Youth off to College! Young Negroes, and a White woman off to spread God's Kingdom on earth! No — the going away party cannot be sad — it is gay and full of Hope and Faith — and we invite Charity to it too — YOUR CHARITY,

DEAR READERS — FOR IT COSTS MONEY — TO SEND KIDS TO COLLEGE — AND OPEN NEW HOUSES . . . MUCH MONEY.

Flewly says there is less than a hundred dollars in the bank and about \$800.00 will be needed to carry us thru to November . . .

EIGHT HUNDRED DOLLARS!!! A fortune! What to do? Naturally first pray to the Holy Ghost, Blessed Mother and St. Francis — then start working, begging . . . Oh! the plans I had made . . . and all I had time to do was pray . . .

For I had had a nasty fall this August — that made a deep gash in my leg and took a nick out of my shinbone — But there was no time to doctor it, I figured, too much to do . . . the money to get — Chicago to prepare for Ann and Ellen, what was a little pain?

Excerpt from a Letter

" . . . I also appreciated your story on our Negro combatants in your last issue and only hope that it helped in some measure towards understanding of this grave problem. I have fled Germany myself to escape persecution on racial grounds and can full heartily understand the position our colored boys are in. They have the same courage and energy; they carry the same guns and fire the same bullets; and their blood spilled for our great U. S. has the same color as the blood of "white" men. Why shouldn't they have the same right to live, if they have the same right to die for and with us?"

Written by a Soldier in the American Army to LIFE MAGAZINE. Reprinted with Permission.

Then the bone went and got infected. Or was it God giving me a little lesson in humility? Be that as it may, I landed in a hospital in Chicago — from where I write this column — immobilized — What can I do — for 800 dollars are still urgently needed? Perhaps — the answer is right here — a little pain, a lot of prayer . . . more faith in God . . . in you all — our friends and readers.

Quietly the Eternal words fall on my ears — in the still atmosphere of this House of Pain . . .

"ASK AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE . . ."
HUMBLY — I ASK — "PLEASE" . . . it is all in your hands now, friends . . .

The food situation in Madonna Flat is critical. Definitely so. Madonna Flat is the Staff Workers' home — but everyone who needs it — shares its meals — we have 10 people who are supposed to eat there — yet daily we feed — at each meal — 15 — 20 — and over. The budget says 75 cents a day for 2 meals for 10 people but barring a miracle — how can 75c stretch for 15 — 20 and over?

If we had staples — canned goods — donated, or money, we could manage — for we can run rings around the most meagre, economical war budget — but without these — we just will have to thin the soup, until it is water — perhaps *WE* should — but how about the hungry ones, that come . . .

RICE, FLOUR, BEANS OF ALL KINDS, POTATOES, PEAS, RAISINS, DRIED PRUNES, TEA, COCOA, CANNED TOMATOES, PEAS, CORN — ARE NOT RATIONED YET . . . IF IT IS MONEY — mark your gift — "FOOD" . . .

God Bless You! Thanks.

THE ADORATION OF THE CROSS

(Continued from Page 1)

And the solitude
Where alone with his soul
Man becomes whole.
They have stood,
Naked like Christ
In the hard light of the stare
Of the curious,
Without hiding for sorrow,
Without cover for love.

They have received the nails,
The old folk are nailed
To the strange bed
In the alien land to die.
The mature, to the work
That promised end and repose
And begins again.
The young to the sacrifice
That is measureless.
The whole world to pain.
They have made the way of the Cross

*How old it is
The wood of the Cross!
How dark it is
How heavy and sweet,*

*How wide the wound
In the broken heart
How fast the nails
In the hands and feet.*

The people are coming up slowly
To kiss the cross.
They are free
Having nothing
At peace in a world at war
And without fear.
Bowing down low
Kissing the cross
Familiar now
The cross that those
Who have mourned through the ages
Through the ages have blessed.

In a single wave of love
Breaking upon the shores
They are singing inaudibly
"Consummata est!"
The countrymen smile
And whisper
"Grow seed!"
"In the dark earth"
"Grow seed in me!"

The women
"Increase,
"Life of the world
"In the barren womb!"

The very old
Who have made friends with death
"Break Spring!
"Break
"From the ageless tree."

The soul of the world
Is singing inaudibly
"I am your tomb,
O Christ!
Christ,
Be at rest in me!"

*How old it is
The wood of the cross!
How dark it is,
How heavy and sweet,
How wide the wound
In the broken heart
How fast the nails
In the hands and feet."*

RENDEZVOUS WITH GOD

Dear Ann Marie:

Remember the other night when you said you could understand how priests and nuns had vocations, but when it came to LAY PEOPLE HAVING VOCATIONS! That was unheard of. Nothing I said convinced you, though I quoted the New Testament . . . and even some pretty strong arguments from Maritain, Gilson, Cardijn, etc. You seemed to want proof by a priest . . . and in a sense, I didn't blame you.

Well, I've got the proof. But first, let me recall that conversation we had. You agreed that we are in the midst of a social revolution. That leaders — lay Catholics, intensely aware, intensely spiritual — are desperately needed. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if there were a group of lay Catholics who would apply the truth of Christ to the chaos about us? With no special vows or marks to distinguish them from others, but a courageous plunging of the white heat of Christ's light into today's darkness." Many words like this you said wishfully.

As a matter of fact, you became quite vehement when you asked where, in all this "mess" were Catholics? Why did Catholics just criticize other people's efforts, instead of lending a helping hand? Why all the "beefing" about Unions being red-infested, when most of the hard work has been done by them? And so, far into the night, we argued the spectacle of a world sick to death, being offered a patent medicine like Communism or Fascism, while we Catholics, with the *real remedy* to hand, sit idly by — seemingly willing to let the patient die.

The book that discusses this problem is "The Layman's Call" by Father Wm. R. O'Connor, Professor of Theology, St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie. The point he makes over and over again is this simple sentence:

"NOTHING HUMAN IS ALIEN TO A CHRISTIAN."

That is to say, whether a man be a capitalist, a communist, a Negro, a Jew, a Protestant, etc., he is our brother, because ALL MEN ARE OUR BROTHERS. "No one is excluded from some contact with Christ, or from some kind of membership in His Mystical Body — tenuous though it may be. The poor, the outcast, the beggar, the street-walker, the criminal, the gangster . . . the Communist, the Nazi, the Fascist . . . they are all there, members of the Mystical Body and our brothers in Christ."

Now, it follows, doesn't it, that if a man is my brother I must help him out when he's in trouble. That is, if there is some sore spot in the Mystical Body, how can I turn aside? Try to forget? To forget . . . that bodies are suffering, that minds are being warped and souls going to hell, perhaps; that in them Christ's passion — God forbid — is in vain! Here is where the LAY APOSTLE comes in. The very essence of the lay worker is that once he sees a sore spot — anti-semitism, anti-Negro bias, etc. — he tries to do something about it.

He plays the healing rays of Christ's sun upon it, like a supernatural Vitamin D.

But has *everybody* a vocation to go out and disrupt society in order to put it together again? NO! Of course not. Father O'Connor does make the startling statement that every man can and does have a vocation. Because a vocation is a "call to interior perfection rather than an exterior state; to a spirit of love and obedience rather than the mere observance of the letter of the law; to detachment of the mind and will rather than a pharisaical separation from the world." But in general, a lay vocation will consist in work in one's own sphere, like with like . . . a salesgirl will work on other salesgirls to bring them back to Christ, a newsboy with newsboys, a doctor with doctors, etc. Of course, it is always a two-fold job: we must always first bring ourselves back to Christ, or closer to Christ; then — and only then — do we work with others.

Doesn't this dissipate the notion that people in the world cannot have a vocation? Father O'Connor's book rids us of the idea that God has just thrown us lay people to the wolves, so to speak, to fend for ourselves. It clarifies marvelously, too, Pope Pius' definition of Catholic Action: "the participation of the laity in the work of the hierarchy." It proves that each one of us, if we will but look about and see, has a noble destiny to do a special work.

Now this LAY VOCATION can be even more specialized than trying to leaven our own milieu. Such special vocations are possessed by Catholic Workers, Friendship House workers, etc. That is, we leave our normal work for a particular field of action which has been founded for that purpose. For example, Friendship House works for Interracial Justice, so that Negro and White America can get to know each other in a friendly atmosphere, and work together for a common aim — the Brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God. But to work in FH, do you need a special "call?" A strange moving of the "spirit?" Not at all, for, ordinarily, even priests and nuns don't have these experiences. We do need, according to Fr. O'Connor, (1) right intention, and (2) fitness to the state by nature and grace. In other words, Lay Apostle, do you want to see all things restored to Christ (right intention); have you the health, background and abilities to do the special work involved?

But . . . the Lay Apostle must expect a terrific intellectual battle to ensue, once he says yes to the two questions above — criticism, from the right and from the left. The left calls you a fool, because you are try-

ing to do the impossible . . . leaven the natural with the supernatural, for they are materialists, and think the only solution to all our problems can be material things, like more money, more jobs, etc. The *right* (among whom are a great many Catholics) also says you are trying to do the impossible. They have what is called the "ivory tower" complex. BECOME HOLY IN THE WORLD? "Only nuns and priests can be really holy. Only religious have a right to get serious about becoming holy . . . If you're so anxious to be holy why don't you enter a convent?" These are the sort of things you hear, and very discouraging they are, too, to the thousands of lay people who have neither the priesthood, religious life or marriage as their life's work. Yet, who is to tackle some of the awful problems that beset society, who is to go into the highways and byways of this world's cesspools where it is not often possible for religious to go, if not militant lay Catholics? As Maritain says in the introduction, "There is mud and blood in the world, yet while our hands dabble therein our hearts must be pure, and, if they are, they also purify."

So the most exhilarating thing about Lay work is this: no matter where our job, no matter whom we are thrown in with, we can, by the grace of God, conquer them for Christ, not become part of them but make them a part of us, and hence of the living Mystical Body. Thus we shall sanctify the profane, which according to the thinkers of the Catholic Renaissance, will be one of the main features of the new age of Christendom "into which we are entering amid ruin and agony."

The big BLINDSPOT is that we don't, enough of us, realize the significance of the word "LOVE." Love draws no circles to keep anybody out. Love embraces the whole world. Love wants to put the spirit of Christ into the world, and not keep it apart from the world. We would outdo ourselves in charity to bring back an erring brother because to us then, the Mystical Body of Christ would not be a beautiful concept, but a LIVING REALITY.

So, to critics who say that we are interfering with priest's work, refer them to the "Layman's Call." Lay Apostles HAVE a vocation. "Sanctity and perfection belong to life in the world just as truly as they do to life in a monastery or convent." Matt Talbot made the Dublin dockyards his rendezvous with God, for "union with God can be attained no matter what our state or vocation."

Here's hoping, darling, that you find yours!

Ann Harrigan

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